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Letters to the Editor

Kissinger Replies

I refer to your recent article, "Henry's Slant" (AW&ST Sept. 13, p. 13). The White House spokesman has characterized it as an "outrageous lie." This is an understatement.

1. AVIATION WEEK claim: That the Secretary of State directed the Central Intelligence Agency to slant a vital U. S. intelligence estimate and that the CIA lent itself to the plan.

The facts: I never directed, requested or suggested that the CIA, or anyone slant that intelligence study, or any other intelligence study. In this particular instance:

- When the study was begun, I knew only that the President had directed the CIA to keep Backfire intelligence under constant review. I did not know what data was being used. I did not know who was doing the study. I made no attempt to shape its findings.
- I talked to no one at the CIA, George Bush included, about the study.
- I did not know that McDonnell Douglas was doing the study until after it was completed.
- I did not see any part of the study in draft, nor was I briefed on it. I have not seen the finished text to this day.

2. AVIATION WEEK claim: That the story that I warped the intelligence estimate is based on information from a "White House official."

The facts: Only two White House officials know anything about the study. Both categorically deny the allegations in your article. Neither has talked to an AVIATION WEEK reporter. I challenge you to name your source. If you thought it in the national interest to spread this anonymous libel about the Secretary of State, the CIA and about our security in the first instance, then it is at least as clearly in the national interest that the public be able to judge the credibility of that source.

3. AVIATION WEEK claim: That I have "conceded to the Soviets that the Backfire will not be considered in the heavy bomber category in the (strategic arms) negotiations and is making sure intelligence estimates confirm his position. . . ."

The facts: No agreement on the Backfire has been reached. No "concession" as you allege with regard to the Backfire has been made. No proposal has been given to the Soviets which has not been approved by the NSC.

4. AVIATION WEEK claim: That the Ford Administration is "preparing to consummate a treaty based on Vladivostok permitting the Soviets to operate the Backfire as an intermediate-range bomber and through other concessions limiting the U. S. cruise missiles."

The facts: The U. S. government is negotiating on the basis of the Vladivostok accord, but we are far from "consummating" an agreement such as you describe. The Backfire and the cruise missile issues remain open.

In sum, your article is malicious invention, as insulting to our dedicated intelligence agencies as to its intended target. There are legitimate intellectual reasons to oppose further strategic arms agreement with the Soviet Union. Honest difference is possible; informed debate, indeed, is vital to a sound public understanding of the issue. But a national journal hardly serves the cause of enlightened discourse by peddling anonymous lies, particularly on a matter so central to the very survival of our nation.

Aviation Week welcomes the opinions of its readers on the issues raised in the magazine's editorial columns. Address letters to the Editor, Aviation Week, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N. Y. 10020. Try to keep letters under 500 words and give a genuine identification. We will not print anonymous letters, but names will be withheld.

to verify its claims before printing them; you made no such attempt and could not have.

A responsible publication would pause before accusing the Secretary of State of manipulating intelligence estimates and the CIA of lending itself to such a scheme; you did not.

A responsible publication would print a retraction and a full apology once the facts were known and the error clear.

HENRY A. KISSINGER
Secretary of State

(AVIATION WEEK & SPACE TECHNOLOGY is a responsible publication; verified the facts contained in the original story (AW&ST Sept. 13, p. 13); offers no apology and no retraction.—R. B. H.)

Bush Replies

The AVIATION WEEK & SPACE TECHNOLOGY for Sept. 13th in the Washington Roundup section made reference to alleged manipulation of intelligence produced by the Central Intelligence Agency. It is regrettable that you had made no attempt to give us an opportunity to comment on the relevant portion of your report which impugns the integrity of the national foreign intelligence production process, of Secretary Kissinger, of myself as the President's chief intelligence adviser, and most important, of all the intelligence professionals who serve this country.

Specifically: I have never received nor would I ever entertain a suggestion, from whatever source and for whatever reason, to slant the intelligence product. I would never consider abusing my authority as Director of Central Intelligence for the purpose of manipulating results of professional analysis of intelligence data. I have complete confidence that CIA and intelligence community analysts working on this type study would resign before they would do what your article suggests.

In one short article, Secretary Kissinger, CIA analysts and, by inference, myself, have been maliciously slandered. I hope you will try to partially correct the damage by printing this letter.

GEORGE BUSH
Director
Central Intelligence Agency

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